DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 840 JC 010 002

AUTHOR	Gerdeman, R. Dean
TITLE	Academic Dishonesty and the Community College. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, Los Angeles, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-JC-00-07
PUB DATE	2000-07-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0010
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, University of California at Los Angeles, 3051 Moore Hall, Las Angeles, CA 90095-1521. Tel: 310-825-3931.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Cheating; Codes of Ethics; *Community Colleges; Diversity (Student); *Honesty; *Plagiarism; *Student Attitudes; Student College Relationship; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest cites studies of academic dishonesty in two- and four-year institutions, examining variables such as frequency of dishonest behavior, individual and environmental factors associated with dishonest student behavior, and responses of faculty. Academic dishonesty appears related to: (1) individual characteristics such as student academic achievement, age, social activities, major, and gender; (2) peer group influences; (3) instructor influences; and (4) institutional policies. Higher rates of academic dishonesty were associated with students with lower GPA's; younger students; traditional college students; underclassmen; social groups with tolerant attitudes toward cheating; classes where the subject matter seemed unimportant or uninteresting; or where the professor seemed disinterested or permissive. The digest concludes with recommendations to reduce academic dishonesty in two-year colleges including: (1) communicate policies on academic misconduct regularly to students and faculty; (2) encourage faculty to discuss dishonesty with students; (3) establish non-permissive test environments with watchful instructors, spaced seating and varying exam formats; (4) enforce policies in a consistent, fair and timely manner; and (5) maintain emphasis on mature behavior, self-responsibility and proper conduct. Contains 12 references. (PGS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 447 840

ERIC ® Clearinghouse for Community Colleges

University of California at Los Angeles
3051 Moore Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521
(310) 825-3931

Digest

July, 2000

EDO-JC-00-07

Academic Dishonesty and the Community College

By R. Dean Gerdeman

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

JC010002

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges

University of California at Los Angeles
3051 Moore Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521
(310) 825-3931

Digest

July, 2000

EDO-JC-00-07

Academic Dishonesty and the Community College

By R. Dean Gerdeman

Cheating on exams, plagiarizing, falsifying bibliographies, turning in work done by someone else, receiving improper assistance on assignments, and intentionally facilitating cheating on the part of others are commonplace in American higher education. All of these behaviors comprise academic dishonesty, a widespread problem at colleges and universities (Burke, 1997; McCabe & Trevino, 1997). Dishonest academic behavior occurs at all types of institutions and involves a wide array of students (Desruisseaux, 1999). A primary issue facing community colleges is how to effectively reduce dishonest student conduct. This digest cites studies on academic dishonesty from both two- and four-year institutions. Though studies focusing specifically on community colleges are relatively rare, many findings from four-year institutions are relevant for community colleges.

Frequency of Dishonest Behavior

By most measures, cheating is prevalent on college campuses around the nation. McCabe and Trevino (1996) found that two out of three students admitted to dishonest academic behavior in a study of 6,000 students at thirty-one highly selective colleges and universities. In a sample of 1,800 students at nine state universities, seventy percent of students admitted to cheating on exams, eighty-four percent to cheating on written assignments, and almost half to inappropriately collaborating with others on assignments (McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Genereux and McLeod (1995) reported that eighty-five percent of males and seventy-nine percent of females at an urban community college admitted engaging in at least one dishonest behavior. Over twenty-five percent of students had engaged in one of the following: sharing of exam questions, listing false references in papers, allowing others to copy during an exam, or plagiarizing parts of papers. A survey of faculty at a multi-campus community college found that eighty percent of respondents had suspected academic dishonesty in their classes and sixty-five percent had been certain of dishonesty (Burke, 1997).

A number of authors and commentators have suggested that cheating is on the rise among college students, although relatively few longitudinal studies exist to confirm this assertion. Methodological inconsistencies between studies conducted over the last fifty years greatly complicate meaningful comparisons (Crown & Spiller, 1998). McCabe and Trevino (1996) reported that the overall percentage of students admitting to at least one incidence in test cheating rose slightly from 63 to 70 percent between 1963 and 1993. Substantial increases in the number of students copying from others on exams (from 26 to 52 percent), using crib notes during tests (from 16 to 27 percent), and improperly collaborating on written assignments (from 11 to 49 percent) were observed. Other dishonest behaviors such as plagiarizing, falsifying bibliographies, and turning in unoriginal work remained essentially unchanged or had decreased. Overall, these data indicate moderate increases in academic dishonesty over the last few decades.

Factors Associated with Dishonesty

Research has revealed numerous individual and environmental factors associated with dishonest student behavior. The following four categories represent common factors cited in the literature: individual characteristics, peer group influences, instructor influences, and institutional policies.

Individual Characteristics

Five student characteristic variables are frequently related to the incidence of dishonest behavior: academic achievement, age, social activities, major, and gender. In a study of students at a suburban community college, Antion and Michael (1983) found that students with lower GPA's were more likely to cheat on an examination. Crown and Spiller (1998, p. 689) noted that "a significant negative relationship between cheating and GPA," as well as other measures of achievement, is a recurring theme in the literature. Younger students, traditional college students, and underclassmen are more likely to engage in cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty (Crown & Spiller, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Whitley, 1998). Social activities such as membership in a fraternity/sorority, frequent partying, and increased extracurricular involvement have also been related to higher levels of dishonesty (Crown & Spiller, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1997). Several studies have indicated that business majors are more likely to cheat than non-business students and that business majors have more tolerant attitudes toward dishonesty (Crown & Spiller, 1998; Roig and Ballew, 1994). The relationship between gender and dishonesty is less clear. Studies indicating that males are more likely to cheat are common, as are studies indicating no significant differences in gender (Crown & Spiller, 1998; Whitley, 1998).

Peer Group Influences

The behaviors and attitudes of peers influence student decisions regarding academic misconduct. McCabe and Trevino (1997) found that students' perception of peer disapproval was the strongest predictor of reduced cheating behavior. Genereux and McLeod (1995) reported that estimates of the prevalence of cheating among peers significantly predicted cheating behavior. According to Crown & Spiller (1998), studies have consistently indicated that students are more likely to cheat if they observe other students cheating or if they perceive that cheating is commonplace or acceptable among peers (Crown & Spiller, 1998).

Instructor Influences

Students who perceive instructors to be concerned for students and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

actively involved in the learning process are less likely to engage in dishonesty. If the professor seems indifferent or if the subject matter seems unimportant or uninteresting, students feel less moral obligation to avoid cheating (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997; Kerkvliet & Sigmund, 1999; McCabe & Trevino, 1996). A number of studies have indicated that the environment within the classroom or examination setting, as established by the instructor, can have significant impacts on cheating (Crown & Spiller, 1998; Roig & Ballew, 1994; Whitley, 1998). Genereux and McLeod (1995) reported that permissive instructor attitudes and low instructor vigilance tend to increase cheating, while higher vigilance, use of essay exams and spacing of students further apart tend to reduce cheating. A study of classroom settings by Kerkvliet and Sigmund (1999) found that higher number of test proctors, use of non-multiple choice exams, and use of multiple versions of an exam reduce cheating. Exam content and structure is also important, as students are more likely to cheat on tests perceived to be unfair or confusing (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997; Genereux & McLeod, 1995).

Institutional Policies

Aaron (1992) found that over ninety percent of community colleges in a national sample have academic integrity policies and almost ninety-eight percent have procedures for dealing with student misconduct. Community colleges were significantly less likely than four-year institutions to have separate guidelines for academic dishonesty distinct from other types of student misconduct. The community colleges were more likely to rely on student handbooks and orientation to communicate policies rather than specific programs and faculty presentations. Effective communication of policies and increased student awareness of penalties and enforcement tend to reduce dishonest behavior (Aaron, 1992; Crown & Spiller, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Students do not seem to be opposed to strict penalties, as long as they are clearly articulated and evenly enforced (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997; McCabe & Trevino, 1996).

Responses of Faculty

College faculty members tend to be highly disapproving of academic dishonesty but may not necessarily be vigilant about dishonest behavior. In Burke's (1997) sample of community college faculty, respondents did not believe dishonesty to be a serious problem at their institution. When student dishonesty was suspected or occurred, faculty tended to employ informal measures with students rather than pursue official procedures. Time constraints, due process protocol, fear of backlash, lack of administrative support, and misunderstanding of policies may all contribute to faculty reluctance to act on suspicions of cheating (Burke, 1997; Roig & Ballew, 1994). Aaron (1992) reported that twenty-five percent of community colleges sampled did not employ any specific method for disseminating information on academic integrity to faculty and that less than three percent of the colleges relied on faculty to disseminate information to students.

Recommendations for Two-Year Colleges

College leaders should establish an environment where dishonesty is viewed as unacceptable and where any possible benefits are outweighed by risks of being caught and peer disapproval. Specific recommendations are as follows:

1) Communicate policies on academic misconduct to students and faculty. Regular communication through a variety of media (e.g. handbooks, orientations, programs, course materials) conveys the message that academic integrity is an important institutional priority.

2) Encourage faculty to discuss dishonesty with students. Faculty comments reinforce and remind students of unacceptable behavior.

3) Establish non-permissive examination environments. Watchful instructors, spaced seating, and varying exam formats are effective deterrents.

4) Apply consequences in a consistent, fair, and timely manner. Inconsistent and unpredictable responses to dishonesty erode student support for existing policies.

5) Maintain an environment of trust and honor. An emphasis on mature behavior, self-responsibility, and proper conduct enhances academic integrity.
(Burke, 1997; Kerkvliet & Sigmund, 1999; McCabe & Trevino, 1996, 1997; Roig & Ballew, 1994; Whitley, 1998).

References

Aaron, R. M. (1992). Student academic dishonesty: Are collegiate institutions addressing the issue? *NASPA Journal, 29*(2), 107-115. (EJ 442 669)

Anton, D. L., & Michael, W. B. (1983). Short-term predictive validity of demographic, affective, personal, and cognitive variables in relation to two criterion measures of cheating behavior. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 43*, 467-482. (EJ 287 627)

Ashworth, P., Bannister, P., & Thorne, P. (1997). Guilty in whose eyes? University students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in academic work and assessment. *Studies in Higher Education, 22*(2), 187-203. (EJ 549 250)

Burke, J. L. (1997). *Faculty perceptions of and attitudes toward academic dishonesty at a two-year college*. Unpublished dissertation. (ED 431 486)

Crown, D. F., & Spiller, M. S. (1998). Learning from the literature on collegiate cheating: A review of empirical research. *Journal of Business Ethics, 17*, 683-700.

Desruisseaux, P. (1999, April 30). Cheating is reaching epidemic proportions worldwide, researchers say. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 45, p. A45.

Genereux, R. L., & McLeod, B. A. (1995). Circumstances surrounding cheating: A questionnaire study of college students. *Research in Higher Education, 36*(6), 687-704. (EJ 518 273)

Kerkvliet, J., & Sigmund, C. L. (1999). Can we control cheating in the classroom? *Journal of Economic Education, 30*(4), 331-351.

McCabe, D. L., & Trevino, L. K. (1996). What we know about cheating in college: Longitudinal trends and recent developments. *Change, 28*(1), 28-33. (EJ 520 088)

McCabe, D. L., & Trevino, L. K. (1997). Individual and contextual influences on academic dishonesty: A multicampus investigation. *Research in Higher Education, 38*(3), 379-396. (EJ 547 655)

Roig, M., & Ballew, C. (1994). Attitudes toward cheating of self and others by college students and professors. *Psychological Record, 44*(1), 3-12.

Whitley, B. E., Jr. (1998). Factors associated with cheating among college students: A review. *Research in Higher Education, 39*(3), 235-274. (EJ 567 552)

http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/ERIC/eric.html

ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced.

The ERIC Clearinghouse is administered by the National Library of Education (NLE) and operates under OERI Contract No. ED-99-CO-0010. The opinions expressed in this digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of NLE/OERI and no official endorsement by NLE/OERI should be inferred.